

NOTES ON THE SUNDAY SCHOOL  
LESSON FOR NOVEMBER 8.

David's Grief Over Absalom.

(2 Sam. 18:24-33.)

"IS THE YOUNG MAN SAFE?"

The teacher will have a good deal of intervening history to review to-day. The main points are as follows: Absalom's rebellion gathered force rapidly. David, however, was an old warrior and shrewd, and began to organize his forces for successful resistance. Fortunately for him, he had three good generals—Joab, Abishai, and Ittai. He divided his forces into three armies, and encountered the hosts of Absalom in Mount Gilead. In giving instructions to his generals, David bade them, under all circumstances, to spare the life of his son. The fortunes of war leaned toward David's army, and Absalom was driven defeated from the field. Riding in hot haste through the forest, his head was caught in the spreading boughs of a terebinth tree, where Joab found him and slew him. The battle over, swift runners were despatched to bear the tidings to the king. This brings us to the lesson text. Having dealt with the text in the best way that is open to the teacher, we would suggest that for the practical application we take the suggestive question of David concerning his son: "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

There are many young Absaloms in this world. Like him, they have many things that make them very attractive in the eyes of others. But the course that they are pursuing makes this question of David's very appropriate in their case. "Is the young man safe?" This is a question that many a young man would resent if it were asked of him. His reply would be: "Yes, I am perfectly safe." Still, let us press the matter a little, for it is full of instruction.

"Is the young man safe?" No. "Why not?" Well, he has begun to indulge in strong drink, and though he has never yet been intoxicated, still his appetite seems somewhat too strong for him totally to restrain it. He would resent the suggestion that he is in any danger, but that does not alter the fact. Thousands better than he began as he has done, and they have ended their lives under the awful curse of drink. What has happened to others may happen to him, and he may yet fill a drunkard's grave. While he indulges in strong drink, it can not be said that that young man is safe.

"Is the young man safe?" No. "Why not?" Because he has given up his life to money-making, and all else occupies a subordinate place in his plans. He is becoming a money-making machine; all his sympathies are being dwarfed, so that the calls of duty are being disregarded and his soul is fast shrinking away. The miserly spirit is developing, and before he knows it he will be a miser. But covetousness is idolatry, and thus the man is becoming an idolater. An American idolater. Is that possible? Yes, possible and actual,

too, for we have thousands of them, and many of them belong to the outward church of the Master. Mott Street has Chinese idols and Wall Street has American idols, and before each there are many worshippers.

"Is the young man safe?" No. "Why not?" Because he is reckless in his way of handling money. His income is not large, but his outlay is. How shall the difference be met? That is the question that troubles him. It does not occur to him that the outlay must be stopped. No. There must be some other solution to his question, and in time the result of the way in which he solved that problem becomes only too apparent. Forgery, embezzlement, theft—these are the ways in which he hoped to increase his income. For a while all worked well. But at length there came that awful day when all was discovered, and the end is told behind the bars of the State prison. The danger with our young man began when his income was not sufficient for his manner of living.

"Is the young man safe?" No. "Why not?" Because his thoughts are not pure. He keeps company with such imaginations as he would be ashamed of if others could see them. But from thoughts to desires, and from desires to deeds are logical steps. True, he would not acknowledge the danger at the present moment, but a look ahead into the future will reveal this same young man unblushingly doing deeds at which he would have stood aghast a few years ago. No, while he keeps such mental company as he now does, he is far from being safe.

"Is the young man safe?" No. "Why not?" Because he has a lot of opinions that are false. He has begun to disbelieve the Word of God. He has commenced to think that prayer is useless. And though he still goes through the outward form, the life of it all has fled, and it will be only a question of time before all outward form will die, and the young man finds himself without a belief in God or in eternal truth. Has this not been the history of hundreds of young men who at one time promised so well?

If I had a class of parents I would also make the following application: "Is the young man safe?" No. "Why not?" Because there is a lack of the right parental example, and, other things being equal, the young man will follow the example of his father. The home life in many families is such that the young man is in the very greatest danger, since, if he follows that example, he is sure to run into grave peril.

Finally, "Is the young man safe?" Yes. "Why?" Because he has taken the Word of God as the man of his counsel. He can say: "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." That is a good safe-guard, for, as someone has said, it is a good thing, hidden in a good place, for a good purpose. He who takes the Word, and with it offers the prayer, "Order my steps in thy word," is safe. For God has promised to guide all such, as we saw in lesson No. 4. There is no safeguard like the Word of God, taken as the daily guide of a young man. If he takes heed to his steps, "according to thy Word," there are no temptations that shall overcome him, and no dangers from which he shall not escape. We know of no other course that shall enable us to answer the question, "Is the young man safe?" in the affirmative.—Rev. A. F. Schaffner, D. D.

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